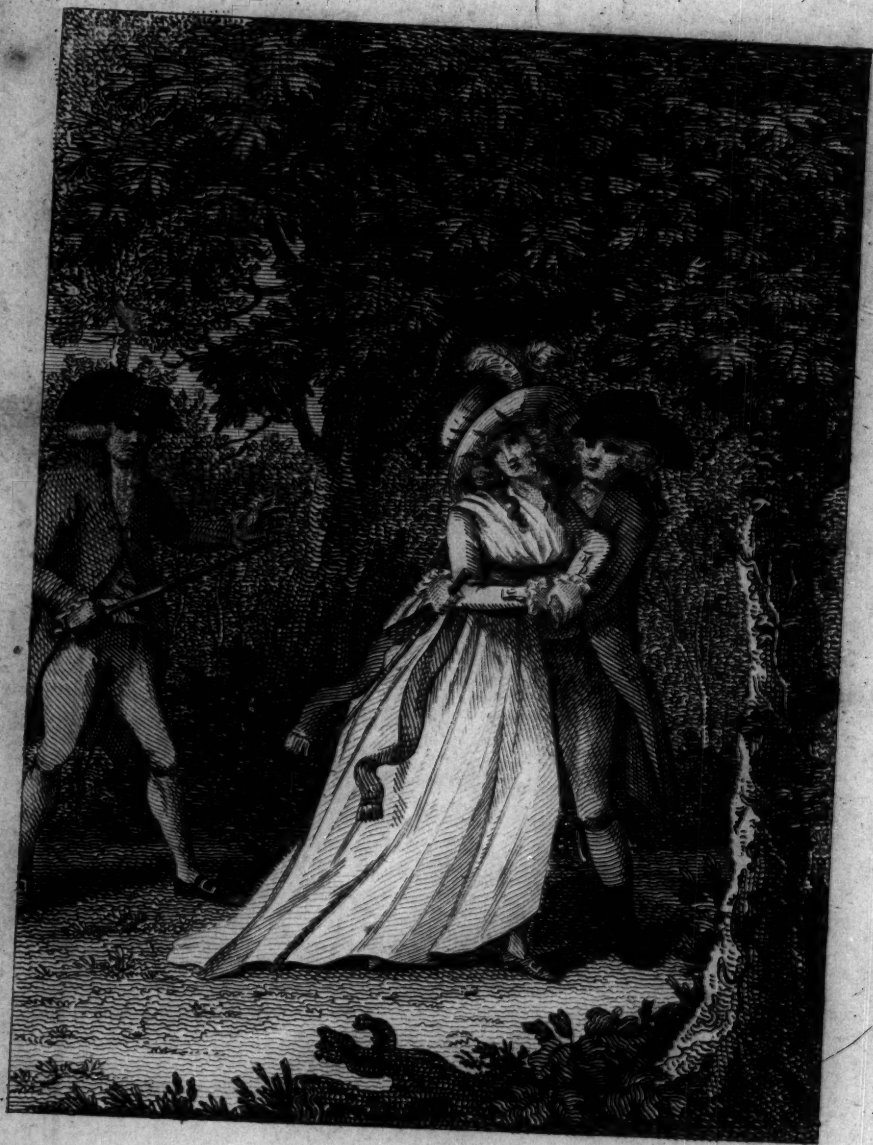
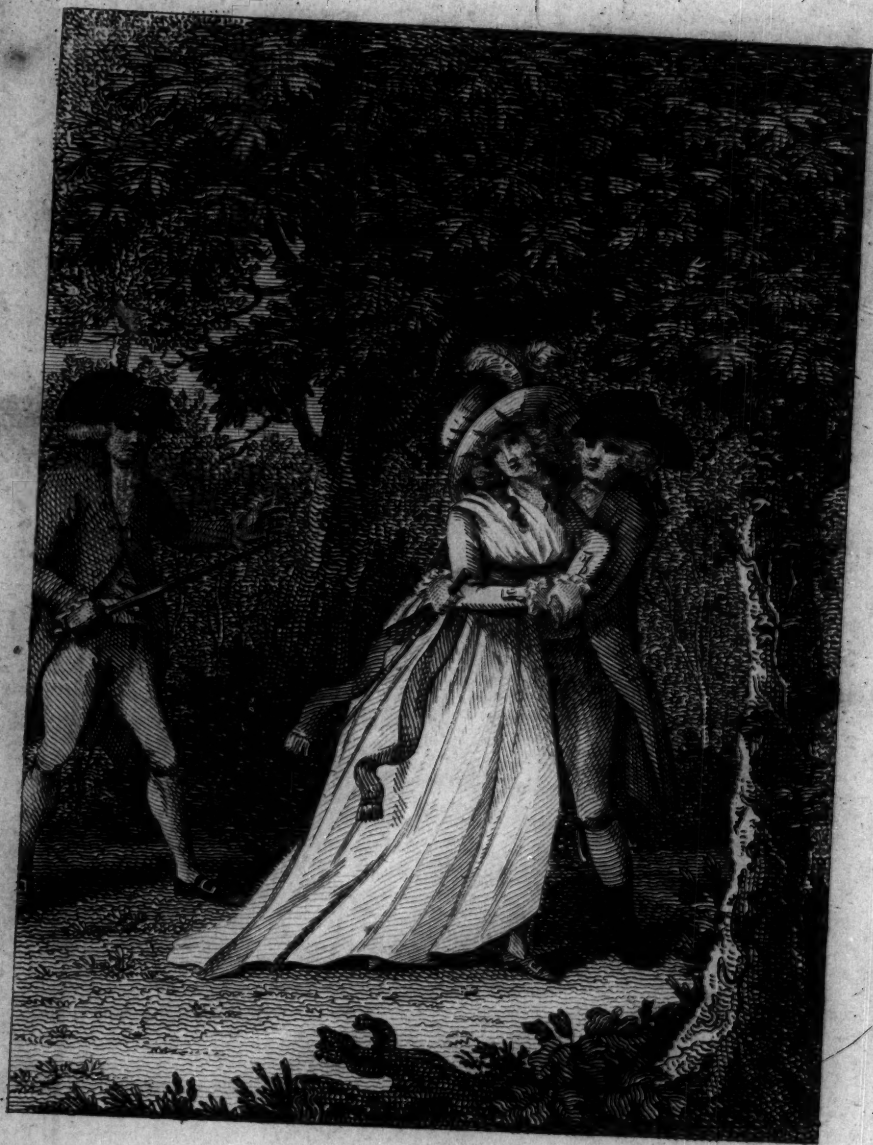




Miss Sedly rescued by Clerville from the
attacks of Young Altamont.

*Published as the Act directs. Aug. 24, 1787. by J. Roach N^o 5 Russell Court,
Covent Garden.*



Miss Sedly rescued by Clerville from the
attacks of Young Altamont.

*Published as the Act directs. Aug. 24, 1787. by J. Roach N^o 5 Russell Court,
Covent Garden.*

THE

Double Perplexity ;

OR, THE

MYSTERIOUS MARRIAGES;

When wayward passions Reason's power disarm,
And rob fair Virtue of her right to charm,
How oft have sages told, and poets sung,
Man's like a bark o'er bounding billows flung :
Yet shou'd that bark some skilful pilot gain,
Or struggling honour still the men retain,
By Morton learn the day may yet be won,
And safe in port the happy vessel run.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY J. ROACH, AT THE BRITANNIA
PRINTING OFFICE, WOBURN-STREET,
NEW DRURY THEATRE ROYAL.

1796.



43.
7. 6.
461.

P R E F A C E.

HOWEVER exquisite any dish might be considered in itself, yet a constant repetition of the same at an entertainment would infallibly disgust the guests.—And as authors may not unaptly be denominated caterers for the Public, they should endeavour, not only to season their productions well, but to offer such a variety as shall keep the attention awake, and not oblige the Reader to exclaim, “ ’Tis at least the fiftieth edition of the same story.” For this purpose we have novels in letters, novels in chapters, and novels Heaven knows how many ways, till one would imagine the attempt were as easy to create a world as to write a novel upon a plan entirely new. Convinced of this, the author does not presume to intrude his little work before his kind perusers as a *rara avis*, an absolute black swan; but only as a mode of writing rather less worn down than the aforesaid letters, chapters, and other ingenious designs and literary vehicles so long made use of. To blend the *utile dulce*, to improve and entertain have been his objects: Such an attempt will ever, by a liberal Public, be deemed

laudable; and should the performance prove worthy their attention, it would be an insult on their understandings and generosity to doubt a moment of its success. To their protection he commits his little offspring, certain the fondest parent could not present his darling to more indulgent hands—hands ever ready to reward merit, and look with candid lenity on those imperfections, from which few writers are exempt, and which, therefore, to be entirely without is more than the writer of this can, in his most vain moments, be induced to imagine.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

Lord Altamont,
Hon. Mr. Altamont,
Colonel Morton,
Clerville,
Crab,
Handy,

WOMEN.

Lady Altamont.
Miss Altamont, in reality
Mrs. Clerville.
Miss Clayton.
Miss Sedly, in reality,
Mrs. Morton.
Sukey.

Servants, Countrymen, &c.

SCENES—London, Altamont-Lodge, an Inn,
and a Country Village.

THE

T H E

DOUBLE PERPLEXITY;

O R,

THE MYSTERIOUS MARRIAGES.

A C T I.

SCENE. *An Inn at Canterbury.*

HANDY *solus, throwing down a portmanteau.*

SO, Mr. Portmanteau! be so obliging as to lie quietly there, or I may, probably, lie myself down as quietly, since I am nearly tired to death. What an unfortunate thing it is to be clever, because my master, Colonel Morton, knows the brilliancy of my genius, 'tis with me as with a second Mungo—Handy here, Handy there, and Handy every-where—The other day we were at Paris, now before a man can well turn himself about we are in Canterbury, and truly we must be in London to-night, though every bone in my skin is dislocated with rumbling over the confounded pav'd roads of France, and tossing in the plaguy packet—nor can I, for the soul of me, conceive what should occasion all this mighty expedition.—The Colonel can't come home to be married—to

my knowledge he has one lawful wife already, and though we have left her behind under the maiden appellation of Miss Sedley, she is no less legally Mrs. Morton, for all that.—Since this then cannot be his scheme, what the devil can be the meaning of this our galloping journey, especially as I never heard of any rich old aunt or gouty uncle have taken it into their heads to be weary of this life, and leave him a good fortune to enable him to like it better than they did—or that he has rode express to blow out the brains of some impertinent, who might have been so unpardonably unpolite as to aver it was hot when he might think proper to say it was cold, or any other matter of equal importance. However, I'll puzzle my brains no longer, but give way, that is if I can—(*bell rings*) and there sounds a proof, I cannot—(*the Colonel calls*) “Handy, Handy”—And at last enters.

Col. Morton. Order the fellows to be ready with the chaise immediately. (*Handy bows and exit.*)

(*The Colonel takes a letter from his pocket and looks it over.*)

How often have I read this epistle of his Lordship, yet to what purpose do I pursue it; or, indeed, to what purpose have I travelled so far in consequence of it,—Are there not invincible, insurmountable obstacles to a compliance with the request it contains.—Since then, without an explanation of those obstacles, it is impossible I can visit the Altamont family with honour.—How unaccountable is the almost irresistible impulse that seems to drive me thither once more, let me repeat my attention to the contents of Lord Altamont's favour.

(*Reads.*)

DEAR

DEAR HENRY,

A long acquaintance with your father's virtues, endeared him to my heart, and made me ever wish for an alliance with his house. On his death-bed I told him my desires, he grasped my hand affectionately, and his last breath was employed in his thanks to me, and his prayers for your prosperity. You was then much too young to be informed of our conversation, you now are not. My Lydia is eighteen, a partial parent thinks her handsome, and he knows her good—Herself and thirty thousand pounds await your acceptance; and your early appearance in Grosvenor-square will convey the highest pleasure to your sincere and expectant friend.

ALTAMONT.

Generous Altamont!—what have I but my commission—and shall I in return be base enough to deceive a mind so noble—shall I assume the character of a lover to his daughter, at a time when I am engaged by ties the most solemn to another.—Fatal moment.—Yet has my Harriet a fault; can I reproach her with either coolness or inconstancy; can her mind or person be condemned.—What cruel caprice, then, makes me thus neglect her—thus refuse her the justice of openly acknowledging her my wife—and thus follow a pursuit only to be attended with confusion and disgrace.—Yet I will see Miss Altamont, though reason would persuade me it is even worse than madness.—Frail mortals! how little do we listen to her dictates—but how blindly do we follow our whims, our follies, and our passions.

Enter

Enter HANDY.

Handy. The chaise is ready, Sir.

Col. Morton. Very well.

(Rather sharply, and exit.)

Handy. Egad, my master seems a little tir'd with his expedition too, I think—I have not heard him speak so cross for a month. To do him justice, though a Colonel, I do not believe he fancies himself entitled to send us poor valets to the devil, at least, four and twenty times a day. However, in his present humour, it is no business of mine to stand prating here—so off we go again, to stop the Lord knows when, for never was he so reserved since Handy exercised his handy abilities in his service.

(Exit Handy.)

S C E N E II.

Lord Altamont's, in Grosvenor-square.

Miss ALTAMONT, and Miss CLAYTON.

Miss Clayton. How heavily you sigh, my dear Lydia.

Miss Altamont. Have I not reason?

Miss Clayton. Not that I know of.—It is unkind to keep your sorrows to yourself; you rob me of my right in not telling me to participate in them—I am sure you know all my little troubles.

Miss Altamont. Little troubles indeed, my dear sympathizing Clayton; how happily for you they yet are so—Alas, mine are of a greater magnitude: This morn displayed a scene in which my future hopes of happiness or misery are intimately concerned. Have I not then cause to be uneasy?

Miss

Miss Clayton. Ah! let me know it—Though I can boast but a small portion of that good sense which distinguishes Miss Altamont, I may have the felicity to hit upon an expedient which may alleviate your sorrows—at all events, I wish to share that affliction I cannot lessen.

Miss Altamont. Kind Charlotte, I can no longer refuse you!—Know then, 'tis not above two hours since I have left my father, who had called me into his study, for a purpose to me unspeakably dreadful—a proposal of marriage was the horrid theme!

Miss Clayton. Heavens! is that so very terrible?

Miss Altamont. Have patience—"The gentleman I have selected for you," said my Lord, "is in his person, and in character, unexceptionable; and what may be to the full as interesting, a young officer; if to this I add, he is the son of my dearest friend, Mr. Morton, and that my heart is set upon the match, from the ever yet shewn obedience of my daughter, I expect no opposition to my wishes—Her happiness will ever be dear to me; and in this, I think, I have effectually consulted it."—It was with the utmost difficulty I stammered out a desire to be allowed a short time to consider on so important an object, as a change of situation which must determine my future fate. This Lord Altamont was too reasonable to deny—he permitted me to retire—and, alas, my Charlotte, I am now completely miserable.

Miss Clayton. Yet why, my dearest Altamont! Col. Morton, I have heard described as handsome, as accomplished a man, in very little danger of a refusal from our sex, when he shall be inclined to convert some blooming virgin to a wife; nor do I

see

see any thing so lamentable in it, being your father's intention you shou'd be that Lady.

Miss Altamont. Ah! Clayton, how much I blush, when I tell you I have no claim to the title you have mentioned.—Col. Morton has been wrote to by my Lord—is expected every hour.—How can I receive him on the projected footing, when the falsely called Miss Altamont is the wife of Clerville.

Miss Clayton. Astonishing—Ah! you close concealer, the wife of Clerville, that amiable youth, who so frequently visited us when we were in Paris, at which time, I think, I have heard Lord Altamont say, Col. Morton was in Italy.

Miss Altamont. Yes, it is even so—the sweet address, the soothing magic of the all prevailing Clerville, made me forget my filial duty, and a private marriage was the consequence.—The dear Clerville followed us to England, and resides in town; how little does Lord Altamont surmise he has already a son-in-law, though not in Colonel Morton.—What must be the state of my anxious bosom, conscious it must be known, yet dreading the awful moment when it shall be related. The less objection I can make to Col. Morton, the harder is the task, the more inevitably must an eclarcissement ensue.—Ah! pity me, my Charlotte, may you never know my distresses.

Miss Clayton. Pity you—Ah! sincerely; What is to be done—Suppose you throw yourself on the generosity of the Colonel!—A generous mind will scorn to take advantage of your confidence, and he may not invent some plausible excuse to my Lord, for avoiding the honour he intends him, but may even, perhaps assist you in the so much dreaded discovery.

Miss

Miss Altamont. I have no other resources, I will be explicit with him, and endeavour to hope the best. Lend me your arm, my Clayton, and let me endeavour, by getting a little air, to revive my exhausted spirits. *(Exeunt.)*

S C E N E III.

Miss Sedly's apartment in Paris.

Miss SEDLY seated, playing on the guittar, and singing.

Long as each revolving hour
Bade my anxious bosom mourn,
Can no kind, no pitying pow'r,
Haste my Morton's safe return.

Unrequited passion's anguish,
Even then should cause the tear,
Hapless Palas must I languish
Even were my Morton here.

While yonder mirror yet can say,
Still I'm young, and still I'm fair;
False Morton feels his love decay,
And leaves me victim to despair.

Kind soother of my solitary hours, thou pleasing instrument, how dost thou endeavour to steal from passing moments some portion of their load of woe; yet I have, at least, one consolation amidst my sufferings,

sufferings, the happy reflection, that I have not deserved them. If the truest love that warmed the female heart could have entitled me to my Colonel's constancy, it should be mine,—Alas, how soon have all those vows, those raptures, with which he impressed on my susceptibility the stamp of genuine affection, been forgotten. Where does he wander—for what purpose does he roam! No duty calls him from my arms; since the trumpet of Belona is exchanged for the soft lute of the olive-crown'd Peace. But, ah! let me not dwell on his unkindness. (*A knocking at the door is heard.*) I wish for no visitors, indeed: how cautious must I now be, a deserted wife is an object ever subject to the busy observation of scandal, and the cruel world will ungenerously add to her real distresses the venom of fictitious report.—Oh, it is my uncle Crab, to me a liberal benefactor; yet, from having been unfortunate enough, more than once, to have fallen into hands whose talents were employed in deceiving him, he, improperly, suspects the whole world of similar designs, and it would be no very easy matter to persuade him, it is possible to find an honest man.—The desertion of my Morton, will give additional strength to his arguments, nor can I tell how to conceal my sorrows and their cause.

Enter CRAB.

Crab. Good morning, niece.

Miss Sedly. I am happy to see you, my dear uncle.

Crab. I believe you may; but it is not one in a hundred I would believe. Most people, now-a-days, never are so completely happy to see their friends—as just when they wish their throats were cut.

Miss

Miss Sedley. Surely you judge too hardly of mankind.

Crab. I am afraid not; but, hey-day you have been in tears, niece!—What did the Colonel forget to kiss those pretty ruby lips of yours before he went out this morning; or has your squirrel, as Gay says,

“ Watch’d occasion, broke his chain,

“ And fought his native woods again ?

Miss Sedley. (*With a heavy sigh.*) Colonel Morton did not go out this morning, Sir.

Crab. O, what is he in the house then!—and never to make his appearance.—I take it very ill, I assure you.

Miss Sedley. Indeed you wrong him. I have not seen or heard of him this week—and then only by a short note. He acquainted me particular business required his presence in England—but he left me totally in the dark as to the nature of it—nor did he solicit my company!

Crab. There’s a precious fellow for you now!—A dog, that not six months ago would lie under your window from sun-set to sun-rise in a cold winter’s night—and vow, swear, and lie, till his throat was dry again.

Miss Sedley. Consider, dear Sir, he is my husband—do not be so harsh in your expressions, were it but in pity to your disconsolate, abandoned niece.

Crab. Fiddlestick—all stuff and nonsense—But pray do you feel not a little inclination now, to discover in what manner he may chuse to employ himself on these little rambles?

B

Miss

Miss Sedley. Alas! he is his own master.—My employment is to sigh and weep.

Crab. His own master, is he?—Faith, that's more than most married men can say.—But, however, as you are so sorrowful, I will just, *at present*, entertain you with no more of my sarcasms, as the Colonel is pleased to call them, but seriously inform you, I too have some particular business (of rather more importance than his, I believe) which calls me likewise to England—and I think you cannot do better than to go along with me.—O, I should enjoy catching my gentleman by surprise vastly—to pop upon him just as he was kneeling at the feet of some transcendent fair, and endeavouring to make as pretty a fool of her, as he has of a certain relation of mine.

Miss Sedley. How can you banter me at such a time?—Indeed, I am ill able to bear it.—And, besides, was I to do as you propose, he would deem me an impertinent intruder on his concerns; and it would, perhaps, still more effectually estrange him from me.

Crab. Never fear.—I have a scheme in my head—leave matters to me—If I do not make him as fond a love-sick swain as ever, then never deem well of my politics more.

Miss Sedley. O, uncle!—Could, could you accomplish that point, my grateful bosom would adore the ground that bore you.

Crab. Well, well—we shall see.—Get you ready for your journey.—I have something to do just now; but will call on you, and settle the hour of our setting out. O, I will manage him, depend on me.—A pretty fellow, indeed! [Exit Crab.]

SCENE

SCENE IV.

LORD ALTAMONT'S.

Lord and Lady ALTAMONT in the drawing-room, Miss ALTAMONT and Miss CLAYTON, the one at her tambour, and the other at her forte piano.

Miss Clayton. This is the most lively little bagatelle of a tune I ever met with.—Do you not think so, Miss Altamont? (*Turns and perceives her friend leaning in a disconsolate attitude over her frame; rises, goes to her, and endeavours to amuse her by talking about her work.*)

Lord Altamont. I am amazed the Colonel is not yet here, my Lady—I am afraid my daughter will think him not the most impatient lover in the universe.—Shall you not, my dear?

Miss Altamont. Indeed, my Lord, I entertain no such thoughts.

Lord Altamont. Well may be so,—I believe my anxiety has made me forget how short the time is since I wrote to him. On recollection, it is hardly possible he should be here yet.

Lady Altamont. My dear Lord, I am much surpris'd you should take so little notice of our Lydia.—My beloved child has lately been but the shadow of her former self. The roses of Hygeia have fled her cheek, and left the lily in possession of that face in which they once so sweetly blended themselves together.—My Lord, we must have some advice.

Miss Altamont (aside.) Affectionate mother!—Ah!—did I dare to confide in thee the source of

my disorder, how would it ease my throbbing, troubled heart.

Lord Altamont. Why Lydia 'is a little fair, I acknowledge; but there is no necessity for a girl of quality looking like a country hoyden. I admire the delicate style infinitely more; and no doubt Colonel Morton, as a man of refined taste, will be of my opinion.

Lady Altamont. On my congratulating Lydia upon the intended union with that amiable character, she thanked me with her usual sweetness; but methought a pensive languor seemed settled in her features—and her subsequent reserve, even to a mother, has alarm'd every maternal feeling.—Should she be averse to the match!—should she be miserable!

Lord Altamont. All decent modesty—nothing else, my Lady—'tis all so much the better; but bless me, is not that a chaise rattling through the square? Perhaps our expected—at least I hope so.

Miss Altamont. (aside.) At much as I fear it.

Lord Altamont. It has stopped, and with us.

Enter SERVANT.

Servant. Colonel Morton is arriv'd, my Lord.

Lord Altamont. Shew him up immediately.

(Miss Clayton takes the hand of Miss Altamont, who seems ready to faint.)

Miss Clayton. For Heaven's sake endeavour to support yourself. Consider the appearance your evident perturbation must make.

Miss Altamont. 'Tis true, my dear Charlotte; but 'tis no easy task to look at ease, when thus agitated by conflicting passions.

Enter

Enter COLONEL.

(Lord Altamont runs up to him, and shakes him by the hand.)

Lord Altamont. Welcome, most noble Colonel—thrice welcome to Grosvenor-square—Colonel Morton, ladies. *(They curtesy, while Lady Altamont views her daughter with anxiety, who avoids her observation.)*

Colonel. *(aside.)* Now, which of these two ladies is my intended? Both are exquisitely beautiful; yet, tho' the countenance of the younger appears clouded by the rude touch of sickness, there is a something in it infinitely touching and interesting.

Miss Clayton. *(in a whisper to Miss Altamont)* What a handsome fellow he is?—Was he come to marry me, I would not sigh so bitterly.

Miss Altamont. *(faintly smiling.)* Go, you wild girl. *(The Colonel returns his Lordship's compliment, and bows to the Ladies)*

Colonel. I am rendered supremely happy by your good opinion, my Lord, and know not how to make a suitable return; but it shall be my study—my——

Lord Altamont. O, I make no question you was going to say something incomparably polite; but if you will be so kind as to save your fine speeches for the daughter, the father will be equally satisfied.—Make her happy, and Lord Altamont is so.

Colonel. *(aside.)* Would to Heaven it were in my power, *(Aloud.)* If every exertion and attention, my Lord, can attain me that happiness, with what solicitude shall I employ every effort to act agreeably to your Lordship's wishes.

Lord Altamont. Just as it should be;—but come, I suppose you will choose to adjust your travelling accoutrements a little. You are perfectly at home, and all my domestics at your command. I will then introduce you more particularly to Lydia. Our dinner hour is five, and we will at present leave you. [*Exeunt all but the Colonel.*]

COLONEL *solus.*

Colonel. Heavens! what a fool was I to venture on this enchanted ground. Have I ever preserved so fair a character, to now cover myself with infamy, through my own infatuation. What a lovely girl is Miss Altamont! Yet she does not seem more internally at ease than myself—Ah! What shall I say to her? My guilt will, I fear, destroy my eloquence. Yet I would gain her good opinion—I would gain her love. Villain! for what purpose? Is this a family to intrigue in— Could you find no other house than that of your best, your only benefactor, for so base a purpose! Half had I resolved to own my engagements—to be the man of honour—and had I not seen this bewitching angel, perhaps I might. Alas! in what a situation is the mind of him, who, stung by conscience, feels the tortures, but yet treads the path of guilt!—I'll think no more. Fate may do its worst. Miss Altamont in one short moment, shall prove a rich reward for future pain. (*Looking at his watch.*) 'Tis late—I have scarce time to dress—(*rings a bell.*)

Enter SERVANT

Colonel. Will you tell my fellow Handy, he is wanted

[*Servant bows and exit.*]

Enter

Enter HANDY.

Colonel. Do you know my apartment?

Handy. Yes, Sir, the housekeeper has just shewn it me.

Colonel. Very well; conduct me to it—and attend to put my hair in order.

[Exit Colonel and Handy.]

Enter two or three of Lord Altamont's SERVANTS, the Butler, Housekeeper, and Valet.

Housekeeper. So, Mr. Corkscrew, he is come—What a fuss he has made!—There was my Lady sent for me yesterday. “Mrs. Napkin,” said she, “be sure the blue sattin room is got ready, and take particular care the bed is well air’d—and”

Corkscrew. Ah—and there has my Lord told me to-day to get one dozen of his most choice wine, that he had imported himself.

Valet. And all on the Colonel's account, I'll warrant you—for he ordered me to tender my services, and make him always as low a bow as I did to himself, But I hear somebody coming—the young ladies, yerhaps; let us be off.

[Exeunt omnes.]

END OF THE FIRST ACT,

ACT

A C T II.

S C E N E I.

Enter SUKEY, Miss Altamont's Woman, singing carelessly, with one of her Mistresses Caps in her Hand.

O ! and I will be married,
 Will I, will I ;
 The deuce of a bit an old maid will I die,
 At least not to do it, I'll heartily try,
 Heartily try :
 At least not to do it, I'll heartily try.

So, so, we have got visitors, I find. I wonder what sort of creatures they are. The master's a Colonel I hear ; so smart, no doubt—and his man in the army too, I suppose—and who knows may be as smart as his master. I should like a soldier of all things. I'll get a sight of them, and, perhaps, set my cap at I know who—

[Sings again.] O ! I will be married, &c.

Enter HANDY, as from his Master's Room ; his curling Irons in his Hand.

Handy. Faith, what little fyren is that—it sings like a nightingale. I wish it would turn this way. It won't—well, I'll go forward. *(Handy passes her, then faces about and meets her.)* Pray, my dear, could you tell me where I could heat these pincers of paper and twisters of hair ?

Sukey.

Sukey. (aside.) How cleverly he talks! Fingers of Paper and twisters of hair! Any one of our ignorant blockheads, my Lord's own valet not excepted, would have called them nothing but curling irons. *(Aloud.)* I will shew you, Sir.

Handy. Positively, I believe I have found out myself.

Sukey. Indeed,

Handy. (affectedly.) At the fire of those bright eyes, which having already inflamed my heart, must possess superior brilliancy—since never was it thus enraptur'd by thy sex before. *(Aside.)* Hum! I stole that out of one of the Colonel's old love-letters to our deserted bride.

Sukey. (giggling.) La! Sir; Is your master as fond of joking as yourself, Mr. Handy? We shall have a pure merry house.

Handy. Joking, my dear,! No, I am serious, upon my honour, as the Colonel says; serious indeed; and by this kiss *(salutes her)* I swear you are the most adorable, most enchanting of women. *(Aside.)* How lucky to have a good memory. Egad, I have got the whole letter by heart, I think. The devil's in it, if this don't do.

Sukey. (aside.) I am glad he is not in jest, though I see I shall like him vastly. What a dear impudent toad it is? *(Aloud, curtsys.)* Dear Sir, you are so flattering; but the gentlemen of the army are renowned for that. Bless me, my mistress calls. I forget the time. *(Curtsys again, and exit.)*

HANDY, *solus.*

If you had staid a little longer, you might have forgot something else. However, here is a good foundation

foundation—time and opportunity.—So, pretty Mrs. Sukey, I think I can tell your fortune, as well as any conjuror in town or country.

[*Exit Handy.*]

S C E N E II. *Clerville's Apartments.*

CLERVILLE, *solus.*

Blest as I am in the possession of my ador'd Lydia's love, what pangs alloy my happiness, when I reflect on the cruel restraint which obliges us to conceal our real situation! With what anxiety, what agony, do I behold the effect her sensations have on my dear girl's health! I will bear it no longer; I will consult my Lydia. I will avow myself to Lord Altamont the husband of his daughter. I will appeal to his paternal fondness, and plead for my wife—my Lydia—and myself. About this hour she was to call on me, if she could without suspicion. (*A knock is heard.*) It is her rap; my heart flies to meet her.

Enter Miss ALTAMONT.

Miss Altamont. My Clerville!

Clerville. My love; still thus pale, thus dejected, thou dear partner of my joys and my sorrows. Speak—it must not be—in what manner best can I alleviate this distress that preys upon your spirits? I will brave every danger; I will hazard every risk. Speak, my Lydia. Had we not better disclose our connection, than thus drag on existence in suspense.

Miss Altamont. Ah! that we had a few days sooner—but now——

Clerville.

Clerville. (*alarm'd*). But now——what means my Lydia? What new disaster can have happen'd to blast my hopes, and hinder my receiving the blessing of Lord Altamont?

Miss Altamont. A rival, Clerville! and such a one, as I could for a moment forego my love for thee, no woman could reject.

Clerville. Distraction!

Miss Altamont. Be compos'd. It is the son of my father's most intimate friend, to whom, on his death-bed, he promis'd the latter I should be united. I dread his fury on finding his designs frustrated; but more I dread my brother's vengeance.—He was the inseparable companion of Colonel Morton when he was abroad, and though at present at Altamont Lodge, will, no doubt, post to town on the news of his arrival; unless, as indeed my father hinted, we shall all go there.

Clerville. Be compos'd! How is it possible!—Yet tell me—has the Colonel declar'd himself; what has he said; how did you answer him?

Miss Altamont. When he first came it was near our dinner hour, and after a few common compliments, he retir'd to adjust his dress; but when our repast was over, he was introduced in form by Lord Altamont as my lover, who shortly left us together.

Clerville. I am on the rack, my Lydia!—Proceed.

Miss Altamont. To do him justice, he began in the most delicate manner to express his gratitude to my Lord for his kind intention in his favour, and his hopes those intentions would be completed by my smiles, on which he a little romantically declar'd his fate depended. I was much on the reverse,
indeed:

indeed ; on my father's account I could not leave him abruptly ; but, however, behaved only with distant civility, and affected to take it only as the effect of his usual politeness to our sex ; though well I knew how long the plan had been determined.

Clerville. Madness and confusion !—I will go immediately to Lord Altamont—I will aver my right—I—

Miss Altamont. For the love of Heaven—for my peace—my dear Clerville, do not be so violent !—I scarce durst stay, yet cannot quit you, till you give me the assurance you will take no steps till you hear from me again.—My affections, need I tell you, are inviolable—something may turn out to our advantage—at present nothing can be attempted.

Clerville. Well—-as to please you is the utmost of my ambition, I make the promise you request ; but be, in pity to my anxiety, as speedy as possible in your communications.

Miss Altamont. Depend on me.—Adieu, my all—my husband !

Clerville. Adieu, my Lydia !—When next we meet may it be for ever ; at least till death shall separate the sacred tie. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE

S C E N E III.

A Village Cottage near Altamont Lodge.

Enter CRAB and Miss SEDLEY.

Crab. Here we are,—Not a little provoking though; Lord Altamont is not down at his seat, and his son on a hunting expedition. His Lordship was a school-fellow of mine, and I have been told has an amiable daughter; with her I had hoped to procure you an asylum, while I went in search of this runaway Colonel. However, as we have secured this little retreat, you can here reside with that privacy you so much covet, till I procure some intelligence. When I get to town I will wait on his Lordship, and since you desire it, without mentioning the Colonel's name, give him as much of your history, as may induce him to permit Miss Altamont to visit you now and then in your solitude, when they come to the lodge.

Miss Sedley. How kind, my dear uncle! The countenance of a respectable family will indeed protect me from the insinuations of the malevolent—and should I again be blest in my Morton's love, afford him satisfaction.

Crab. Ah! Your Morton, as you call him, had a great regard for your character, to be sure. I never liked that scheme of his, the keeping your marriage a secret, and I was a great blockhead to consent; but let me meet with him, I warrant I'll bring him round.

Miss Sedley. Only act with precaution, my dearest uncle—reflect my all of happiness is at stake!

C

Crab.

Crab. Aye, aye, and that stake is in a pretty gamester's hands; but I'll say no more. As you are fixed for the present, I'll e'en trundle myself to London, so good morning,

Miss Sedley. Since you cannot stay, Sir, success and felicity attend you.

SCENE IV. *Altamont Lodge.*

Enter Hon. Mr. ALTAMONT, attended by his Huntsman, two French Horns, &c.

Altamont. By Heaven, I'm most confoundedly fatigued. We had glorious sport too, Thicket.—Let the horns play that song you was speaking of; I think I'll hear it.

Thicket. Yes, your Honour.—Blow away my boys.

(Sings.)

Awake, awake, the morning dawn,
While yonder sprightly echoing horns
Shall raise the drowsy sportsman's head
And shame him from the slothful bed.

CHORUS.

With happy heart and active pace,
To join the ardours of the chase.
Before us care and sorrow dies,
Drown'd in the jovial hunter's cries.
As wily Reynard we pursue,
And keep the brush-tail in our view.

CHORUS.

CHORUS.

With happy heart and active part,
 We join the ardours of the chase.
 And when the noble sport is done,
 Tho' long it held, tho' hard we run;
 We briskly charge the flowing bowl,
 Indulging friendship's flow of soul.

CHORUS.

With happy heart and manly grace,
 Recount the ardours of the chase.

Altamont. Gad! very tolerable, upon my word.

Enter SERVANT, with a Letter.

Servant. From my Lord, Sir. (*Altamont reads.*)

Altamont. Coming down—Colonel Morton arrived—marry Lydia—roast an ox—make all the tenantry drunk.—Faith, my father seems quite young again.—Well, I have no objection; Colonel Morton is a lad of mettle, and would soon cure all Lydia's pinings and whinings, I'll answer for't. And, upon my soul, the last time I saw her, she look'd as if she had liv'd upon chalk for a twelve-month. [*Exit.*]

SCENE V.

A Farm House near Altamont Lodge.

Enter CLERVILLE.

The Altamont's, I find, are expected every hour, at this their charming residence, and could I hear

to remain in town!---How fortunate I have been able to procure accommodations at this farmer's, who seems, in his way, to be a very honest, well-meaning man; though I fear not sufficiently discreet to be trusted with a secret of my truly delicate situation---I shall here, at least, have the pleasure of seeing the very apartment in which my Lydia will repose.---Alas! but little of that, if I may judge of her by myself. I may be able to meet her in her walks---I shall have it in my power to observe the operations of my rival; and should it at last, prove absolutely necessary, shall be upon the spot to make that discovery, on which our mutual happiness so critically rests.---I will strol about the environs of their delightful park; to me how doubly so, since there my Lydia has often inhaled the breezy incense of the morn, or enjoyed the cool salubrity of dewy eve. [Exit.]

S C E N E VI.

Altamont Lodge.

Miss ALTAMONT, and Miss CLAYTON, in the former's Dressing-room.

Miss Clayton. My dear Miss Altamont, how concern'd am I to find our journey and arrival on this sweet paradise, seem not to have had the effect I could have wished. Still does "Melancholy mark you for herself." Would to Heaven I could steal away your sorrows; but I fear I shortly have sufficient of my own!

Miss Altamont. Forbid it, kind spirit of pity.---How so, my dear?

Miss

Miss Clayton. Shall I own my weakness? Shall I tell my Lydia---I cannot see the Colonel without emotion. Ah! let me hide my blushes---when I pronounce, I love.

Miss Altamont. Would he then transfer his affections, how happy he might make himself and others. I resolve and rerevolve When I ruminate on your plan of acquainting him with the state of my affairs---should he prove illiberal enough to prefer the gratification of his own desires to my peace of mind-- how easily might he fet my father and my brother irreconcilably against me!---The fatal explanation told by him, would probably produce effects I shudder but to think on!---Was he a man of real delicate generosity, he would drop his suit from his own feelings; since he must see with what unfeigned reluctance I submit to his addresses.

Miss Clayton. Ah! I wish he could see with what pleasure I should receive them.

Miss Altamont. I wish so too, my Charlotte.-- May the great Disposer of events, from our present perplexities, produce future happiness!----I will believe it, and endeavour to assume a little cheerfulness. Come, let us ramble into my favourite shrubbery; I want to order a bouquet, to fill china jars.

Miss Clayton. Most willingly----I am fond of flowers to excess---yet what a lesson do they teach us?---How often has the moralist illustrated by them this certain truth, "How transient the enjoyments---but how certain the thorns of life!" Heigh-ho!

Miss Altamont. Indeed; I must now, in my turn, be the comforters. And I must confess, in

one respect I have the advantage. I am, at all events, certain of the love of my Clerville, the man, the husband of my choice.

Miss Clayton. I am confident, my dear, you did not think to wound me; yet that last expression pains me to the soul; not for your felicity, but for my misfortune.

Miss Altamont. Pardon me, my dearest Clayton, if I touch'd a point too tender. Come, let us walk. [Exeunt.

S C E N E. VII.

Enter ALTAMONT, as roving about the Village.

Altamont. By all that's disagreeable, I can't conceive what the devil these rustics have done with their wives and daughters. I have not met a cherry-cheek'd damsel in my whole peregrination. Curfed provoking! one cannot light of a petticoat any thing tolerable. That Miss Clayton so eternally lock'd up with my sister, is a develish fine girl; but I never can make any thing of her. She is as shy as a wild colt, and would as soon let me tie her garter, as to stay to let me finish one of my romantic effusions. (*Miss Sedley seen walking on the other side of the way.*) But who, in the name of beauty, have we there?—'Tis neither Lydia, nor that shittish little toad I have been talking of; but, by Heaven, as elegant, as lovely as either. No, no; this is no production from the amours of a Hodge or Joan,—no skimmer of dairy cream-pans, or crammer of cackling fowls, squalling ducks and gobbling turkies. Here is grace—here is ton and fashion. Surely some acquaintance
of

of Lydia's I have not yet seen, just come down. Yet, hang it, she does not seem in a travelling dress; and see, she enters yonder cottage. Can that be the habitation of such a divinity? The door is shut.---Yes, yes, she is certainly at home. Egad, I must enquire about all this. 'Tis my father's manor, and all game worth having that comes about it, is lawful prize. (*Clerville passes him.*) Who next pray! D—n it, this is no rustic neither---the dog looks like one of us, but cursedly in the dumps. I suppose he belongs to my charming unknown---to judge by his countenance, however, he cannot be, just at present, over and above in her good graces. Zounds! if he presumes to cross me in this business, I'll have him taken up as a pocher, and sent to sea, or to the devil. Some of our tenants may possibly give me the information I want.---I'll try at least. (*Exit Altamont, Clerville remains.*)

Clerville. Is that the brother of the lover of my Lydia? He certainly is of Altamont Lodge. Be it as it may, there is a peremptory haughtiness imprinted on his brow, which alarms me. I like not her being under the jurisdiction of one who seems so capable of abusing his power. Perhaps I wrong him; but I cannot efface the idea his visage, his manner, gives me of his character. (*passes on and exit.*)

S C E N E VIII. *Colonel Morton's Chamber.*

Colonel MORTON, solus.

What a pretty situation I have thrown myself into! My beautiful insensible is as indifferent to all

all I can say or do, as that image over the chimney-piece. I begin to fear I shall make but a bad piece of business of it. I must have a rival—never was Colonel Morton frown'd on by the sex before. By Jupiter, a thought occurs. There is a good smart girl in the house, a Miss Clayton, I think they call her, who apparently has some little inclination for me or my red coat, I can't tell which; and as she seems the entire confidant of Miss Altamont, by making a little mock love in that quarter, I might get out the whole of what I want to know. In how many villainies does one crime involve a man, in order to support it. (*Rings his bell, enter Handy.*) Where are the ladies?

Handy. Miss Altamont and Miss Clayton are gone towards the shrubbery, Sir.

Colonel. I'll follow them. (*Exit.*)

Handy. So would I my lovely piece of faded silks and refresh'd ribbands, if I could find her. She runs in my head strangely. Sure I shan't be such a fool, as to become a Benedick. I'll keep off as long as I can, however. There shan't be a stratagem left in the ingenious brain of a valet, when that mad action is committed by I Handy, prime minister and privy counsellor to the most magnanimous Colonel Morton. If I am not mistaken, that is her nimble tread along the gallery, and a coming this way. I'll hide behind the curtain, and surprise her. (*Runs behind the bed-curtains and conceals himself.*)

Enter SUKEY, who runs to the glass..

Sukey. Dear me! I think I look most monstrous well to-day. This cap Miss Altamont gave me becomes

becomes me so—I wish that Handy was here—I know he'd like me prodigiously. But how shall I behave now?—Not too bold for certain. Perhaps he'll want to kiss me, as he did before. “No, Mr. Handy,” says I, “I be none of that sort, I assure you.”—(*Bridling up.*) Then he importunes in a genteel way—then I look down to hide my face; and then, he kisses me—perhaps three or four times—and then I must seem in such confusion, though very much pleased the whole time.

HANDY *rushes out.*

Handy. Say you so, my girl. Well, here goes then. (*Catching hold of her. Sukey screams, breaks from him, and runs off.*) Ah, you may run; but I pursue, as Apollo did the flying Daphne—as I once read in my masters Ovid.

[*Exeunt after her.*]

SCENE IX.

Lord Altamont's Study.

Lord and Lady ALTAMONT seated.

Lord Altamont. Well, my Lady—have you spoke to Lydia on the subject of her uneasiness?

Lady Altamont. I have, my Lord—but she still refuses to make me acquainted with it, and begg'd I would change the discourse.

Lord Altamont. I am convince'd, as I laid before, it is nothing but over modesty. We will hasten matters—she will, at bottom, not be sorry for it. O, what a day I am determin'd it shall be.

be. Such entertainment!—the whole country round, for twenty miles, shall remember it to their dying hour.

Lady Altamont. I fear, my Lord, it will not prove a source of entertainment to your daughter; nor will she, I doubt, recollect it with pleasure. I wish you would use a father's authority, and press her more closely to be open with us.

Lord Altamont. Not I, indeed, my Lady. The business of the scene will quickly chase away her vapours—and as for bashfulness, a few awkward ideas, and so forth—don't you recall how prettily you once behaved in the same way? You needed no cosmetic to assist your blushes on the morn that made you Lady Altamont. So let us only think on the necessary orders.—My old solicitor, in Lincoln's-inn, must be set to work instantly. I'll summon him on the back of one of his own parchments.

Lady Altamont. Be it as you please, my Lord. May it all end well. (*Exit Lady Altamont.*)

Enter FOOTMAN. Gives Lord Altamont a Letter.

Footman. From town, my Lord—left at Grosvenor-square, just after your Lordship quitted it. [*Exit Servant.*]

Lord ALTAMONT reads.

Ha! what my old acquaintance Crab!—'Tis his hand and his signature. He is a worthy fellow himself, if we could but persuade him to take the world as it runs, and not lay on his colouring so wonderfully black when he depicts it. Now for his epistle.

My

MY LORD,

On my arrival in England, accompanied by my niece, I did myself the pleasure of calling at Altamont Lodge, where I was informed you was in London; but in Grosvenor-square I found, that while I was posting to town, your Lordship was posting into the country—through which circumstance, I was unfortunate enough to miss of you in both. You have ever, my Lord, professed yourself my friend, and, notwithstanding my usual opinion of men and manners, I am inclined to think you are so, which Crab believes of very few, I assure you. I here put into your power a confirmation of that thought. Miss Sedley, of whose person and accomplishments you once spoke so highly, is at this time actually in the neighbourhood of your seat; at the white cottage, in the village contiguous to Altamont Park. From various incidents (though infinitely deserving the smiles of happiness) she is oppress'd by pensive sorrow, and prefers the simplicity of rural retirement to all the glare of higher life. Yet, lest that attachment to solitude should fatally prey upon her existence, an existence to none dearer than the writer of this, the favour which I beg permission to request of your Lordship is (and I very seldom request permission to beg a favour of any one, not being at all fond of the business) to indulge Miss Altamont in the office of sometimes soothing the fair mourner's affliction; which, to the native benevolence of that amiable young lady's heart, will, I am confident, be the most pleasing occupation I could have petitioned her to assume. My niece should have waited on your lovely daughter, but not even the consideration of an acquaintance with
the

the virtues of a Miss Altamont could induce her to venture amongst the gay circle of your Lordship's mansion. Though often cruelly deceived, to deceive has never been my province—nor would I, for a diadem, introduce to Miss Altamont one whom I could ever blush to acknowledge—the irreproachable, though unfortunate relative of,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient,
sincere and respectful friend,

FREDERICK CRAB.

Lord Altamont,
To be forwarded to the Lodge.

Lord Altamont. Surely my old Sir Testy, as I used to stile him, has adopted a new system of manners from his residence on the continent.—I shall be happy to oblige him, and will shew Lydia this (for him) uncommonly civil communication directly. (*Going.*) O, here she comes.

Enter Miss ALTAMONT, looking down, as in thought.

Lord ALTAMONT, LYDIA.

Miss Altamont. My father! (*Starts.*)

Lord Altamont. Your father. Why yes; but whence that exclamation, uttered with all the dignity of a tragedy princess?—I assure you, child, I have no such thing as a dagger or bowl of poison about me.

Miss

Miss Altamont. Pardon me, my Lord—but I was thinking, and did not at first see you.

Lord Altamont. Well, well—read this. (*Gives the letter.*) What think you of it?

Miss Altamont. I think, my dear father, that Mr. Crab has paid me the greatest of all possible compliments; and that the sooner I hasten to Miss Sedley, the more I shall merit what he has so kindly been pleased to say. (*Aside.*) Ah, how well I know, by the pressure of my own calamities, how exquisite is the relief of a correspondent, sympathizing breast!

Lord Altamont. Visit the cottage then, as you may deem it proper; and if its inhabitant can be prevailed upon to reside with us, assure her of a welcome. She may be one of your bride-maids, Lydia.

Miss Altamont. The first I shall most earnestly endeavour to obtain—the last.—(*Sighs.*)

Lord Altamont. There now!—You girls always appear so mightily serious, at a time when, if you but tell the truth, you never were better pleased in your lives. (*Exit Lord Altamont.*)

Miss Altamont. My father does not intend so continually to afflict me. I must excuse the motive, though thus hurt by the effect. Let me see, he has left me Mr. Crab's letter; it will be an excellent master of the ceremonies on my arrival at Miss Sedley's. I will take it with me, and walk there immediately. If I can be of any service, every moment of delay would be a reproach to my humanity. (*Exit Miss Altamont.*)

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

D

A C T

A C T III.

S C E N E I.

*The Cottage.**Miss* ALTAMONT and *Miss* SEDLEY.*Miss* Altamont.

SINCE then so vain, *Miss* Sedley, have proved the poor talents of persuasion I am mistress of, to induce you to return with me to the Lodge, permit me to lengthen my little visit—permit me to entreat you will consider me as amongst the most ardent of your friends—as one who, though herself unhappy, will ever think it a great alleviation to her own misfortunes, to be able to render those of another more supportable.

Miss Sedley. This is indeed compatible with the exalted character of *Miss* Altamont, and far superior to the warmest thanks of a not ungrateful heart would wish to give.

Miss Altamont. Say no more, my dear *Miss* Sedley.—A something, for which I cannot account, seems to whisper me you are destined to prove the happiest connection I ever formed with my own sex. Yourself and my much esteemed Clayton shall share my all of friendship, while Clerville has my all of love. Have you ever felt that sweet delicious passion? Yet, would I could say, a passion whose sweets are unmixed with the bitters of anxious perplexity.

Miss

Miss Sedley. Ah! would to Heaven I could say so too!

Miss Altamont. You have then loved. But come, my dear, since that expression was alone the sudden effusion of the heart, if you cannot think me worthy of your confidence, I will not take advantage of it; nor shall a syllable on the subject escape my lips—Yet——

Miss Sedley. Ah! Miss Altamont, you have discovered me—and your declaration is so truly generous, that I should be unworthy your kindness, did I hesitate longer to avow my love!—Yes, passionately love. But, alas! my hapless fate!—am doomed to adore a false and perjured swain!—Can you forgive my former reserve, when I inform you the supposed Miss Sedley—is a wife.

Miss Altamont (aside.) Good Heaven!—How similar in one respect we are situated—yet, thank my better fortune, not in all. *(Aloud.)* Forgive you!—How willingly.—I now must solicit your indulgence, since I too am no Miss Altamont.

Miss Sedley. Astonishing!

Miss Altamont. Behold in me the wedded partner of Clerville, who claims from me the sacred name of husband.

Miss Sedley. Clerville! I think I have heard the name in Paris.—There did I first meet my dear, ungrateful Colonel.

Miss Altamont. Colonel, did you say!

Miss Sedley. Too true.—In that city was I united to my Morton.

Miss Altamont. Colonel Morton!—Mysterious Heaven! *(Clasping her hands, as overcome with joy.)*

Miss Sedley (advancing.) My dear, whence this sudden

sudden transport—whence this uncommon emotion! Speak.—What means it?

Miss Altamont (*embracing her.*) Speak—my dearest, best of friends!—Yes; to pour ten thousand thousand thanks—to tell thee, in one short moment thou hast reliev'd me from months of hopeless misery!

Miss Sedley. Still am I confounded!—That I fear is a happiness too great for me to expect to accomplish.

Miss Altamont. It is—it is accomplished.—Know then, as briefly as my beating heart will give me leave, Colonel Morton is this instant at the Lodge.

Miss Sedley. At the Lodge!—Support me fortitude—assist me love.

Miss Altamont. A real fact—and there for the express purpose (countenanced by my father, who knows not that I am the wife of Clerville) of paying his addresses to myself.—Judge then my felicity, in finding it is equally impossible on his part to continue his pretensions, as it is on mine to receive them.

Miss Sedley. How mutual are we involved?—I know not how to act. My Morton so near me! Yet perhaps still.—Advise, my friend—direct me, in pity to my woes.

Miss Altamont. Alas! how much I too stand in need of counsel!—shall I pretend to listen to his suit—shall I appoint a meeting here—will not the sight, at such a moment, of the amiable, the deeply-injured Sedley, awake repentance, shame, remorse, and make his future life a source of tender joy to himself and you?

Miss Sedley. O, would the dreaded interview was

was over!—I am incapable of thought.—I leave the whole to you; you who are so deeply interested in the event, must feel like me, the tortures of anxiety.

Miss Altamont. I do, most poignantly! Pardon me, if now, I leave you. To bid you be entirely composed, would be a mockery of your sensations—yet, my dear, admit that pleasing guest, sweet hope, to be your companion till we meet again—
Adieu.

Miss Sedley. Adieu.—Ah! what a discovery has this day developed!
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

Enter CLERVILLE, who sees Miss Altamont come out of the Cottage, but keeps at some distance, out of sight.

Clerville. Yonder comes my dearest Lydia.—She has made a long visit, whoever resides within those simple walls. I am alarmed!—Yet why? Jealously hath never yet disturbed my bosom, shall I permit it now. I cannot get the intelligence of Barns out of my head, who acquainted me “a monstrous fine gentleman,” as he termed him, had set him to watch every one who entered the cottage from whence Lydia had just issued. I’ll outbribe this same gentleman, and he shall watch for me.

Enter BARNES, who goes on whistling; a hay-fork across his shoulder.

Hollo, my honest fellow!

Barnes. Sir.

Clerville. So, Barnes, the gentleman desired you to keep an eye at the cottage, did he?—he gave you a present, no doubt.

Barnes. Yes, Sir; he gave me a whole half crown.

Clerville. Which I suppose you was very glad of.

Barnes. Why I be but a poor body; and though I reaps and I mows, and I goes to plough and cart, yet deame and I be but badly off sometimes after all, a'nt please yoer honour.

Clerville. Well, Barnes, I will give you two whole half-crowns, if instead of him, you will bring your news to me.

Barnes. Marry will I; trust Hodge Barnes for that. *(Scrapes and goes off.)*

Clerville. So, it is at least, two to one against my rival, if he is so, however *[Exit Clerville.]*

S C E N E III.

HANDY and SUKEY.

Handy. Faith then, my charming superintendant of lutestrings, gauze and muslins, since nothing else will do, I'll fairly take a desperate plunge, and jump over head and ears into the sea of matrimony.

Sukey.

Sukey. And pray, good Mr. desperate brusher, of coats, and overseer of shoes, boots and spatter-dashes, how do you propose keeping our little vessel above water, in this same terrible sea you talk of?

Handy. Why, the god of chances and games has so decreed, that I should (Lord knows how) absolutely be worth two hundred and three pounds, three shillings, and three pence half-penny. Now, as you say, you have one hundred and odd, beside silver buckles, bodkin and thimble, we will take a small inn, which we will soon make a large one; by your pretty face in the bar, and my nimble abilities in the cellar—join'd to——

Sukey. Ah, but you won't be jealous, tho'?

Handy. O Lord, child—no, not in the way of business! Jealous in the way of business!—No, no—I know better than that.

Sukey. Well, a match then.

Handy. Agreed. (*Going.*) D—n it. I'd like to have forgot sealing the bond, though (*Returns and kisses her.*)

Sukey. Without which it should have been of no effect; I promise you.

SCENE IV.

Altamont Lodge.

Lord ALTAMONT, Miss ALTAMONT.

Lord Altamont. Lydia, my dear, why do you not consult your mother upon the subject of your bridal cloaths?—A very short period will now,
I flatter

I flatter myself, see the completion of my schemes.

Miss Altamont. I am perfectly ready to receive the Colonel, my Lord, should he prove as ready to receive me.

Lord Altamont. There's my good girl! little doubt of that, I fancy.

Miss Altamont. Of that I am not quite so clear. To ascertain it, I will, with my father's permission, propose to the Colonel a little ramble to the cottage; and there will, if not inconvenient, beg my honoured mother and yourself, some time after, to drop in; when, if Colonel Morton still wishes for my hand, it shall be his without hesitation.

Lord Altamont. What romantic sport are you at now, Lydia?—But, as the Colonel will enjoy any plan'd by you, I give my concurrence. O, I am now happy. I told Lady Altamont it was all proper decorum, I was sure.—Good morning, Lydia. How much am I pleased with you. I'll throw in a diamond necklace positively more than I intended.

Miss Altamont. Good morning, my Lord.—While I have now so fair a prospect of a favourable *denouement* to my affairs, how is it overcast by reflecting on what Miss Clayton will suffer, when she finds the Colonel can never be hers!—I would not wish to be the messenger of affliction; yet, as she must know it, were it not better to break it to her gently, than to let it rush upon her by surprize?—Undoubtedly—but, in my present state of mind, I could not stand a meeting with her on so sad a subject. What's to be done?—I'll frame an epistle, which I will myself deliver. It will

will save us both an infinitude of confusion and distress. (*Exit Miss Altamont.*)

Enter Hon. Mr. ALTAMONT and BARNES.

Altamont. Have you seen any one?

Barnes. No, your Honour—but I have been given twice as much as you was so kind to pay me, for the very same thing.

Altamont. Zounds and the devil!—By who, pray?

Barnes. I don't know; but it was a tall sort of a man, in a brown coat, and mighty civil spoken.

Altamont. D—n his civility—the fellow I saw. Take this to quicken your apprehension; and if the brown coat comes near the cottage, come to me directly. (*Exit Altamont.*)

Barnes. Ecod, 'tis half a guinea.—'Tis a fine cottage for me. [*Exit Barnes.*]

SCENE V.

Miss CLAYTON in an Arbour in the Shrubby, reading Miss Altamont's Letter.

Miss Clayton. Kind Lydia! how you endeavour to console me.—Yet, at last it is impossible to conceal the fatal tidings!—You dreaded to be the Colonel's—Ah! how I wish'd it.—He can be neither's. That which has eas'd your heart, has pour'd fresh anguish into mine. I had fondly flatter'd myself; I had buoy'd myself with ideas, as futile as the dear deceiver's. I will retire from the Lodge. I will not see the happy Sedley—the

the real Morton. He may return to his allegiance. She may be blest—but I must be for ever miserable. Gracious Heaven! he enters the very walk that leads directly hither. I must fly. (*Retires with precipitation.*)

Enter Colonel MORTON.

Colonel. Hey-dey!—Is the blushing Clayton turn'd a second Miss Altamont?—or, rather, have they chang'd their dispositions? For this morning the latter favour'd me with a smile of complacency, her pretty pouting face has been a stranger to, ever since my first arrival. Nay, she even proposed a party, *en tête à tête*, to visit a little romantic cottage it seems there is in the neighbourhood; at least she challenged me as her beau, and I do not hear of any other invitation: a presumptive evidence, at all events. And may be propitious moments of fortune ever in future forsake me, if I do not, with Lothario,

“Snatch the glorious, golden opportunity,

“And with prevailing youthful ardour woo her.”

To morrow is the happy day!—O thou god of eloquence, whether thou art just at present in Westminster Hall, or at St. Stephen's, attendant on a Sheridan, fly, hasten to my assistance. Pour the melody of thy persuasive periods upon my tongue. Then, language failing at the mighty task, teach me the unutterable glance of melting love—the sigh that breathes the fond contagion. Thus may I win the beautiful fair! while roguish Cupid shall smile on my success, and Venus twine a chaplet

chaplet of unfading myrtle, to adorn my conquering brow!—Nor, while so important is the object, will I disdain even meaner auxiliaries. Though not a coxcomb, on such an occasion, a consultation with my wardrobe may not be improper or unnecessary.—Yet stay.—Am I not a Colonel?—Regimentals then, against the world. That point is carried, *nem. con.* Ye blacks, ye browns, ye greys, what are ye to the all-commanding scarlet. The brightness of that enchanting colour communicates a brightness to the wearer's wit, and both together attack the eye and heart so powerfully, that many a timid damsel cannot muster up assurance enough to attempt a defence, when thus forcibly attacked. Miss Altamont, I do believe, will not prove a conquest quite so easy. "The more danger, the more honour," has been an adage among us military, ever since soldiers were in fashion, which nobody will deny has been some time, so it shall receive no contradiction from me; and, in spite of my Chesterfieldian principles, I shall take the liberty to add another, as well known in the tents of Venus, as the first in the camp of Mars, "The greater the difficulty, the greater the pleasure;" and thus prepared for the encounter, will I brave the hazards of the day. The signal for the charming onset—"Beauty, Love, and Altamont."

[Exit Colonel.]

SCENE

S C E N E VI.

The Cottage.

Miss SEDLEY, in a pensive Attitude, as deeply thinking ; after an interval she speaks.

Miss Sedley. To-morrow, then, is to be the decider of my destiny!—To-morrow, then, is to determine, whether my Morton will forego a lawless passion, and awaken'd by his native honour, return the affections of the still adoring Harriet ; or whether, urg'd to fury by the disappointment of his unwarrantable hopes, disgusted fly me, and disclaim a connection thus thwarting the schemes of his ambition—the madness of his desire!—one raises me to joy ; the other sinks me to despair.—How do such opposite, such conflicting ideas, shatter a frame already injured by my unabating melancholy ! The beauties of nature, so amply display'd around this village, would give pleasure to any breast but mine ; yet the sickness of suspended hope so overcomes me, that I must try them for a little air, though incapable of relishing their other charms. [Exit Miss Sedley.]

S C E N E VII.

The Village.

Enter Hon. Mr. ALTAMONT, who sees Miss Sedley quit the Cottage, to take her proposed walk.

Altamont. By all that's lucky, there she goes, and takes the most retir'd path to the wood.—I'll follow.—

follow.—She cannot be overstock'd with cash, that's certain—the humble insignificance of her thatch'd dwelling precludes that supposition.—I'll attack her at once with rhetoric and money.—Surely one or the other is a bait for any woman! (*Goes after her, and when she has reached some distance overtakes her, and purposely drops his handkerchief, which he picks up and offers, pretending to believe it belonged to her.*)

Altamont. Permit me, Madam, to have the felicity of restoring your little loss.

Miss Sedley. It is not mine, Sir.—I rather think it is already in the owner's hands,—Since I this moment saw you drop it.

Altamont. What a heedless dog!—Upon my soul, Madam, and so it is!—I will take more care of it for the future. It is now invaluable; since to it I owe the pleasure of addressing a lady, whose charms do honour to our rustic shades, though they never could have had the happiness of producing them. (*Aside.*) Hum! a tolerable speech enough for the first, I think.—I wish she would give me a bit of her history though; for hang me if I know what to say next.

Miss Sedley. You are much more polite than I deserve, Sir; especially as ill health, and consequently depression of spirits, causes me to be equally unable to answer your compliments, and desirous of solitude.

Altamont. (*Aside.*) That's one way of telling me she does not want my company, to be sure; but I'll be wiser than to understand it. (*Aloud.*) Had your fate, fair Lady, been adjusted by your merit, sickness or care you had ever been a stranger to. Attention may remove the first: if arising
E from

from pecuniary motives, might I be permitted to offer an alleviation of the latter. (*presents a purse.*)

Miss Sedley. (aside.) Such sudden generosity! An entire strange!—'Tis not the look of genuine benevolence that's seated in his eye. They rove with forward boldness over the poor pallid remains of beauty left by my sorrows. Their wild, their ardent gaze alarms me. (*Aloud.*) Indeed, Sir, you mistake; my distresses do not arise from the sources you imagine. Give me leave to wish you a good evening. (*Curtseys, and is going.*)

Altamont throws himself on his knees and exclaims, Perhaps my lovely unknown, your reserve proceeds from an unwillingness to receive an obligation; but 'tis I, 'tis I, my charming fair, on whom the obligation will be laid. One smile would amply pay me, could I throw the riches of Indostan at your feet. I this dear hand I swear it. (*Takes her hand, who draws it back.*)

Miss Sedley. Leave me, Sir.—You do indeed not know me, or you would not use me thus.—Nay, Sir, I insist upon it—it is too disagreeable such behaviour.——

Altamont rises in a passion. Is devilish civil, in my opinion.—Yet, since you like it not, it shall be altered.—And thus I rise, with active force and youthful vigour,—What but now so humbly I would have sued for—(*Embraces and endeavours to convey her father into the wood, while she screams violently.*)

Enter CLERVILLE.

Clerville. The scream of assaulted innocence is
a new

a new sound in these solitary walks, where I have been wont to only listen to the melodious notes of the feather'd choristers!—Ha! what do I see?—The lady, Barns told me, resided at the cottage! and the haughty youth I so lately met, attempting a deed by which at once he forfeits honour and humanity. Yet know, base villain, it shall be but an attempt—or Clerville deems himself co-partner in thy guilt. (*He rushes forward.*) Scoundrel, desist, or know me for thy foe. *Altamont turns about, and endeavours to defend himself with his horsewhip.*)

Altamont (aside.) Damnation.—The man in brown, as Barns said. (*Aloud.*) Then know the foes of Altamont shall meet his vengeance. (*They scuffle, in the course of which, Clerville gets possession of Altamont's weapon, which he breaks, and then leading off the lady, leaves him with a look of ineffable contempt.*) [*Altamont goes on.*

Zounds, I could burst.—I could massacre mankind.—Have I lived to be thus foil'd?—To-day is yours, take care to-morrow is mine.

[*Exit Altamont.*

Clerville re-enters, as conducting Miss Sedley home.

Miss Sedley. While I thank my generous deliverer, I shudder at the illiberal threats of his antagonists. He called himself an Altamont.—Ah! how unlike the mild, the amiable Lydia.

Clerville. (briskly.) Do you then know my Lydia? do you know her then so amiable? Ah! how the heart of Clerville thanks you for that praise.

Miss Sedley. Are you then Clerville?—little does she think you are here.——

Clerville. Nor would I have her——

Miss Sedley (aside.) As the dear girl means to surprize my Morton with the sight of me—in return will I surprize her with the sight of *Clerville*. At a time when the Altamonts are enraged at the Colonel's deception, Nature may plead in favour of their match, and all may be forgiven. O, could I be instrumental to so happy an event—*(Aloud.)* Will you then, Mr. Clerville, favour me with your company to-morrow morning? I could then relate to you a thousand instances of Miss Altamont's goodness.——

Clerville. Depend on my punctuality; you will afford me a gratification of the highest, and one for which I'd meet a thousand Altamonts.

Miss Sedley. I shall expect you, Sir.

[Exit different ways.]

SCENE VIII.

Village near the Cottage Gate.

Enter BARNS.

Barns. By the dickens, I see'd the gemman in Brown along with the lady yesterday, but he did not go into the Cottage—so I had no business to tell Mr. Altamont; but i'faith i'll watch close this morning. O, here comes the Colonel and his Sister, who, our folks say, he is to have; and that there is is to be hugeous doings at the wedding.—*(The Colonel and Miss Altamont going in.)* So they be safe however.—I'll go and find the gemman, oddzookers here he is.

Enter

Enter CLERVILLE.

(Clerville looking at his watch.) It is nearly the time appointed to attend Miss Sedley—next to my Lydia, I think she is the most charming woman I ever saw *(Sees Barns.)* Well Barns, any thing to-day?—

Barns. O yes, your honour. The Colonel, all in scarlet and gold, Miss Altamont mane fine indeed, be just gone in there, *(Points to the Cottage.)*

Clerville. Egad 'tis very surprising! They must have dropt in by accident. Miss Sedley could never have meant me to have met my rival sure—but together!—my tameness does not become the sacred character of a husband. I am the betrayer of my own, of Lydia's honour, should these frequent opportunities, allow'd the Colonel, be productive of consequences which yet may be prevented. Let what will follow, I'll be a joiner of the party.——

CLERVILLE, enters.

Barns. Ecod, and he goes in too—I'll post to 'quire—and then I shall have earn'd the money of them both. *[Exit Barns.]*

SCENE IX.

An Apartment in the Cottage.

Miss SEDLEY, CLERVILLE.

Miss Sedley. Excuse me, Sir—I would have waited.

waited on you immediately, but some company prevented me. Will you amuse yourself for a few moments with one of the books lying on the table?—and if the do not presently go, I will introduce you to them, if agreeable. *[Clerville bows, and Exit Miss Sedley.]*

Clerville. O yes, I'm in a pretty humour to be amus'd by books beyond dispute. *[a rap is heard.]* Amazement, Lord and Lady Altamont, what can this mean?—I will not be visible till I know further. Where shall I conceal myself?—Luckily they go up stairs—there is no need—O that I could be indeed invisible; yet amongst them.

S C E N E X.

Changes to the Room above.

As Lord and Lady Altamont enter, the Colonel is discovered on his knees to Miss Altamont.—who appears to hear him with encouragement.

Lord Altamont. There, there my Lady, I knew I was right. See how prettily they bill and coo; take her, take her Colonel.

Miss Altamont. If he'll have me, my Lord.—

Colonel. If she does it, then depend alone on me. Oh rapturous word! Thus then with transport do I seize this hand;—a hand—*[at this instant Miss Sedley comes forward from a closet.—Miss Altamont slips behind, and holds the hand of Miss Sedley towards the Colonel.]* Madness and confusion.—My wife—the form of Harriet—
here

here at such a time—speak, art thou a reality or a phantom——

Miss Sedley. Alas, indeed the phantom of my former self.——

Colonel. Heaven's, what a look was there—how fraught with woe—how pale that visage, once blooming into smiles when Morton told his love! I feel, I feel, myself the murderer of the deeply injured, the abandon'd Morton! Yes, by that title—unhappy Harriet will I own thee. Hence vain ambition—hence the raging fires of unhallow'd love; if yet repentant sighs can stop consuming sorrow, if yet returning love can bid the roses of Hygea blossom on thy cheek; behold them here.

Miss Sedley. I would speak; did not excess of happiness deny the power; read then whatever you would wish—in eyes that never can cease to look on you with affection till death has clos'd them in the darksome grave.——

(Lord Altamont runs up to the Colonel with his cane rais'd, and in a violent passion.)

O, you dog; O, you villain—if a child of mine had done so—I would, I would, damme if I know what I would do.

Miss Altamont. How I tremble, though my Clerville's absent. *(Clerville heard from without.)* Ah! what voice is that?—it is—support me!——
(faints, while Clerville rushes in and runs to help her.)

Clerville. Awake my love—my Lydia—awake thou dearest partner of Clerville's heart; awake, relieve this lover, and thy husband.

Lord.

Lord ALTAMONT, Lady ALTAMONT, and the COLONEL, all at once.

“ Husband.”

Clerville. Yes, a husband's rights are mine ; but who shall dare to wrest them from me. Pardon me, my Lord, if my Lydia's situation made me regardless of the respect I owe you ; but let me now petition for,——

Lady Altamont. Petition me, no petition,——I shall choak—I shall——

Lord Altamont. Be moderate, my dear Lord.

Lord Altamont. Moderate I say, indeed !——
(*Honourable Mr. Altamont heard on the stairs.*)
Here comes Charles, zounds he shall shoot them both——

(*Altamont calls as he comes up.*) This way my boys, while I get my little demure into the chaise——some of you drag brown-coat through the nearest horse pond.

Enters, followed by three or four stout fellows.

Hell and confusion, my father----my sister how many more ? by all the powers of disappointment——

Clerville. A disappointment, how fortunate for yourself, Sir ? who who would have ravished the wife of your dearest friend, and murdered the husband of your sister.

Altamont. My God---is all this possible !—From what a precipice have I escaped ?

Colonel. While I, with blushes, acknowledge my fate had been but just.—And while I thank
Mr.

Mr. Clerville for the protection I shrewdly suspect he has afforded my Harriet. I will solicit for him to my Lord, did I not so much stand in need of forgiveness there myself.

Enter CRAB, booted and spur'd as from a Journey.

Miss Sedley. My uncle!

Crab. Aye, your uncle! but how prodigiously retir'd you live here niece! one, two, three, and not half told.—Gad I am sorry I intruded so *mal apropos*, as you call it.

Miss Sedley. O, uncle, such a scene, such discoveries. Need I say I'm happy when my Morton's kind.

Crab. So, so, I'm robb'd of all the schemes I had formed to bring matters about—I am.

Lord Altamont. O, my old friend Crab, 'tis I am robb'd, plunder'd, and cheated—how shall I punish them?

Crab. By forgiving them. For you, Mr. Colonel, I have fortune enough to make you not to dwell upon the loss of Miss Altamont, and interest enough to get you higher in the army than you deserve, provided you don't desert your wife's colours again. But as for you, my Lord—

Lord Altamont. Well, I will own, Crab, your example has done more than your persuasions could have effected. So here passes a general amnesty.

Lady Altamont. Indeed, my Lord, you have much obliged me.

Crab.

Crab. Indeed, my Lady, I think he has much obliged himself. If I know him, he must feel at this moment the happiness he confers; but as Crab must moralize, I cannot help observing, that whilst I reprobate arbitrary power in the parent, I must condemn those concealments, which, though in the present instance, have had a favourable conclusion---had nearly led to consequences which must have embittered the remaining life of every party.

THE END.



TO

TO THE READER.

AS on the stage, whate'er the scene has prov'd,
A Richard rag'd, or hapless Juliet lov'd,
How gay Thalia all our cares beguil'd,
Or Melpomene rais'd the sorrow wild;
When drops the curtain doth there nought remain,
No ancient custom which we yet retain?
The Hero rises, and renew'd his breath,
Awakes from honour'd or dishonour'd death;
No plumey warrior, clad in armour now,
E'en Hotspur makes a most submissive bow;
And, strange to tell, of such a mighty man,
Paint is his theme, a petticoat, or fan.
To make you laugh, who all so late was fear,
Attacks the reigning fashions of the year;
In caps, in curls, in gauzes deeply read,
You'd think the Earl a millener'd been bred.
Or else, for nobler efforts of the Muse,
See pity's strain some gentle Princess chuse:
Whose griefs fictitious, made the sweat-drops flow,
Now bids you turn, and to turn to real woe.
How many a wretch, who needs the rich one's aid,
Fed by pale want, by poverty array'd?

Go,

TO THE READER.

Go, cries the charmer, go relieve their care,
Go, give that little you so well can spare.
What raptures, then, my tragick breast shall feel,
How oft for you I'll draw the murd'rous steel!
Oft drink the poison, and full happy cry,
To bid one live, a thousand times I'd die.
But when no jest attacks the loud applause,
Or mis'ry's sighs more silent feelings cause,
The anxious Author—at the bar of fate,
Stands, trembling—lands, your sentence to await:
Now hopes—now doubts—as clap or hiss prevails,
Now rais'd, now sinking in alternate scales;
So I—not daring by bold impulse led,
Dramatic ground with vent'rous steps to tread:
Tho' to the closet's narrow bounds confin'd,
Yet sue mild judgment from th' impartial mind;
Yet with like passions—lay my humble claim,
And hope indulgence—tho' I fail of fame.

g
h

